

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260418
Site Address:	Berks County Sports Club, Sonning Lane, Sonning, Wokingham, RG4 6ST
Expiry Date:	14 April 2026
Site Visit Date:	23 March 2026
Proposal: Full application for the proposed siting a pre-fabricated converted container on hardstanding to form a refreshment hut.	

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS5 – Development in the countryside ER1 – Core Employment Areas ER2 – Employment uses outside of Core Employment Areas ER3 – Supporting the rural economy NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity DH5 – The historic environment
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
242913	Full application for proposed erection of 3no. covered padel tennis courts and 3no. outdoor tennis courts with associated flood lighting, parking and club huts	Approve – 26 June 2025
062625	Proposed formation of 2 artificial pitches plus floodlighting, fencing, bunding and landscaping.	Approve – 21 August 2021

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objection
WBC Drainage – Additional information required
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection
WBC Built Heritage Officer – No objection

External

No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No objection
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The site refers to the Berkshire County Sports Club County Sports Ground which consists of a cricket ground, tennis courts, sports pitches and associated facilities.

The proposed Siting of a container to form a permanent refreshment hut has been placed centrally within the Berkshire County Sports Club County Sports Ground, which is located immediately outside the Sonning Conversation Area. The container's proposed location means that it is easily accessible along paved footpaths from a variety of surrounding sports pitches. The location is only a few minutes' walk from the Club's permanent cafe and the Sports Grounds' entrance car park where deliveries may occur.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Sustainability:

Policies CP1, CP4, CP6, CP9 and CP11 of the CS permit development where it is based on sustainable credentials in terms of access to local facilities and services and the promotion of sustainable transport. Expanding on this, paragraph 4.57 in the CS aims to prevent the proliferation of development in areas away from existing development limits as they are not generally well located for facilities and services and would lead to the increase in use of the private car.

In this instance, the site is located outside settlement limits, it however proposes a small ancillary refreshment hut to the existing sports ground which is supported (as discussed below) in principle. The proposal is therefore able to be considered in accordance with the relevant policies in the MDD Local Plan.

Location with the Countryside:

The site is located outside the settlement boundary and in the countryside.

Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy does not permit development outside of development limits unless it falls within the following exemption criteria:

- A sustainable rural or recreational enterprise, where it does not lead to excessive expansion away from the original building and is contained within a building suitable for conversion
- Residential extensions or replacement dwellings where it does not result in inappropriate increases in scale, form or footprint or would bring about environmental improvement
- Community facilities
- Affordable housing on rural exception sites adjacent to modest or limited development locations and a localised need is demonstrated

In this instance, the proposal would support an existing recreational enterprise where it does not lead to excessive expansion. The proposed refreshment hut would be located centrally within the site, between the existing sport pitches. As such, it is not considered that the proposed ancillary hut would result in excessive expansion and therefore would be acceptable in this regard.

Rural Retail:

Policy TB18 of the MDD allows retail development outside development limits where it is connected and economically relates to the primary holding, is ancillary in nature and there would be no adverse impact upon other retail areas. It is not considered that the proposal would adversely impact upon existing retail areas. The proposed hut would be utilised ancillary to the existing use of the sports ground which would operate when the sports grounds are in use. Therefore, no objections are raised in this regard.

Heritage and Conservation:

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that development must ensure the preservation of any nearby listed building, including its setting, Paragraphs 210 of the NPPF requires consideration of the harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset and Policy TB24 of the MDD Local Plan requires the conservation and enhancement of Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas, including their views and setting.

Policy TB26 of the MDD Local Plan allows development to Buildings of Traditional Local Character, Areas of Special Character and Areas of Special Landscape Importance where it will retain and enhance the traditional, historical, local and special character of the building or area and its setting.

Whilst the sports ground wider site is adjacent to the Sonning Conservation Area, the proposed refreshment hut is set a notable distance from the Conservation Area itself and would, as outlined above, be ancillary and appropriate within the site's context. It is not considered that the proposal would result in any harms in this regard.

Character of the Area:

General form: Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass, layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high quality design. R1 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that development contribute positively towards and be compatible with the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area.

Countryside: Paragraph 187 of the NPPF requires that planning applications enhance the natural and local environment by 'recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.'

In this instance the proposal is a modest ancillary building situated well within the site between the existing sports pitches. The proposal would not result in adverse harm to the character of the area or countryside in general. The proposal would be seen against the backdrop of the existing use of the site and not readily apparent within the wider landscape. As such, no objections are likely to be raised in this regard.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity and R23 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that extensions relate to neighbouring properties.

The proposed refreshment hut is situated centrally within the application site away from any neighbouring amenity. Given the size and location of the hut, the proposal would not lead to any adverse impacts upon the surrounding neighbouring amenity.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

P2 of the Borough Design Guide SPD ensures that parking is provided in a manner that is compatible with the local character.

The proposal would not result in additional parking requirements, rather the refreshment hut is ancillary to the main use of the sports ground. Any parking would therefore be accommodated within the existing parking on the site.

Flooding and Drainage:

Policy CC09 of the MDD Local Plan requires consideration of flood risk from historic flooding, and Policy CC10 of the MDD Local Plan requires sustainable drainage methods and the minimisation of surface water flow. The site is located within Flood Zone 1. As such, it is not considered the proposal would result in additional flood risk or vulnerability.

The Drainage Officer requested further details of how the surface water and foul drainage would be managed from the refreshment hut. The applicant has provided further details which confirms all foul wastewater from the hut is to be collected in a container (which is in the specification on the plan) and transported down to the clubhouse for disposal in the existing kitchen (See drawing 4). Surface water drainage is going to a soak away (see drawing 5). Given this additional clarification and the scale of the proposal, it is not considered the proposal would result in harm in this regard.

Landscape and Trees:

Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan aims to protect green infrastructure networks, promote linkages between public open space and the countryside, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping and Policy TB21 requires consideration of the landscape character. R14 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires well-designed hard and soft landscaping that complements housing.

The Landscape Officer has not raised any objection in Principle to the proposed refreshment hut. Views of the proposed refreshment hut are mostly contained within the extensive Sports Grounds by the facilities users. Furthermore, the landscape officer acknowledges the additional landscape planting taking place at the site which would help to soften the proposal from any wider views. Overall, the proposal would not result in any significant works at the site and as above would be situated between the existing sports pitches. As such, no objections are raised in this regard.

Ecology:

Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan requires the incorporation of new biodiversity features, buffers between habitats and species of importance and integration with the wider green infrastructure network.

The proposal is not considered to result in harms to the ecology of the site. Following the introduction of 'Biodiversity Net Gain', major developments (from November 2023) and minor developments (from April 2024) must demonstrate how the development will increase biodiversity by a minimum of 10%. In this instance, the proposal would result

in a development area of 14.4sqm and as such would result in de minimis development with regards to BNG.

Conclusion:

The proposal is considered to constitute an ancillary structure which is to be utilised by the existing use and sports pitches. The proposal would enhance the offer at the Sports Ground without causing harms to the character of the area, landscape, conservation area or neighbouring amenity. As such, no objections are raised and the proposal is recommended for approval.

Other:

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010): In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	2 March 2026
Earliest date for decision:	13 March 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	27.03.26